

## Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

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ACTION EA-06

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 HA-02 NSC-05 PM-03 SP-02 L-01

INR-05 CIAE-00 NSAE-00 DODE-00 CA-01 IO-06 PA-01

ICA-01 OMB-01 H-01 /050 W

-----081958 280516Z /11

R 280223Z APR 78

FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3845

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

USMISSION GENEVA

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 KUALA LUMPUR 3603

LIMDIS

FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY HOLBROOKE AND ASSISTANT SECRETARY  
DERIAN FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SREF, MY

SUBJ: INDOCHINESE REFUGEES: THE GROWING PROBLEM IN MALAYSIA

1. SUMMARY: THE RECENT RAPID BUILDUP IN THE REFUGEE CAMP  
POPULATION IN MALAYSIA RISKS A HARDENING OF PRESENT COOPERATIVE  
MALAYSIAN PROACTICE IN GRANTING REFUGEES FIRST ASYLUM. WHILE  
THE PROPOSED NEW USG PAROLE PROGRAM AND LEGISLATION WILL HELP  
OVER THE LONG RUN, THEY DO NOT ADDRESS SATISFACTORILY THE  
IMMEDIATE SHORT-TERM PROBLEM. WE SHOULD TAKE IMMEDIATE STEPS TO  
STREAMLINE OUR PROCEDURES AND SPEED UP MOVEMENT TO THE US OF  
INS-APPROVED REFUGEES. WE SHOULD ALSO BEGIN TO CONSIDER MORE  
CAREFULLY THE EVENTUAL POSSIBLE EXTENT OF THE VIETNAMESE BOAT  
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REFUGEE PROBLEM. WE REQUEST AN ADDITIONAL OFFICER TO ASSIST  
IN THIS AND IN HANDLING THE INCREASING REFUGEE LOAD. END SUMMARY.

2. I WOULD LIKE TO CALL TO YOUR PERSONAL ATTENTION THE GROWING  
INDOCHINESE REFUGEE BURDEN HERE IN MALAYSIA WHICH IS CAUSING  
US INCREASING CONCERN AND WHICH I BELIEVE MERITS YOUR PERSONAL  
CONSIDERATION.

3. AS OUR REGULAR REFUGEE REPORTS HAVE SHOWN, THE RATE OF NEW ARRIVALS OF VIETNAMESE REFUGEES IN MALAYSIA HAS MUSHROOMED IN RECENT WEEKS. FROM THE AVERAGE ARRIVAL RATE OF 800 PER MONTH BETWEEN LAST AUGUST AND FEBRUARY OF THIS YEAR, WE HAVE SEEN THE NUMBER GO UP TO OVER 1500 IN MARCH AND OVER 2000 ALREADY IN APRIL. THE EXPECTED SLUMP IN ARRIVALS DURING BAD SAILING WEATHER FROM DECEMBER THROUGH FEBRUARY DID NOT MATERIALIZE, AND NOW THAT THE WEATHER IS BETTER, IT APPEARS THAT WE CAN EXPECT EVEN LARGER NUMBERS HERE OVER THE NEXT SEVERAL MONTHS. RECENT REPORTED SRV ACTIONS SUCH AS NATIONALIZATION OF SMALL AND MEDIUM TRADERS ARE ALSO BOUND TO ADD TO THE FLOW.

4. THE RESULT HAS BEEN A RAPID BUILDUP IN THE NUMBER OF REFUGEES CURRENTLY IN MALAYSIAN CAMPS, FROM ABOUT 3600 AT THE BEGINNING OF JANUARY TO WELL OVER 6000 NOW. THIS HAS BEEN DESPITE OUR BEST EFFORTS AND THOSE OF THE AUSTRALIANS AND OTHERS TO RESETTLE REFUGEES; SOME 5500 HAVE BEEN RESETTLED IN THIRD COUNTRIES SINCE LAST AUGUST. AT THE PRESENT RATE OF ARRIVALS, HOWEVER, EVEN A CONTINUATION OF THE BEST EFFORTS OF ALL OF US UNDER CURRENTLY FORESEEABLE PROGRAMS AND PROCEDURES WILL NOT KEEP PACE. THE PAST WEEK IS AN EXCELLENT BUT ALARMING EXAMPLE -- WE ACTUALLY SENT ON THEIR WAY TO THE US A WEEKLY RECORD OF 203 REFUGEES; AT THE SAME TIME, 597 ARRIVED IN MALAYSIA, ALSO A NEW WEEKLY HIGH.

5. THE MALAYSIANS ARE OBVIOUSLY WELL AWARE OF THIS BUILDUP AND  
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THE PROSPECT OF EVEN GREATER NUMBERS ARRIVING SOON ON THEIR SHORES. DESPITE OCCASIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENTS TO THE CONTRARY, SO FAR THEY HAVE IN PRACTICE LIVED UP TO THE PRIME MINISTER'S AND OTHER GOM REPEATED ASSURANCES TO US BY ACCEPTING VIRTUALLY ALL SUCH REFUGEES FOR FIRST ASYLUM. THEY ARE PROPERLY APPRECIATIVE OF OUR EFFORTS TO TAKE THESE REFUGEES OFF THEIR HANDS, AND OF OUR PROPOSED LEGISLATION AND REQUEST FOR ADDITIONAL PAROLE AUTHORITY. THIS SHOULD HELP ASSURE THEM EVEN MORE THAT OVER THE LONG RUN THEY CAN COUNT ON US TO PROVIDE A REFUGE OF LAST RESORT. HOWEVER, WE DETECT RISING CONCERN ON THEIR PART WITH THE IMMEDIATE PROBLEM OF THIS RECENT TREND, AND WE FRANKLY WONDER HOW LONG THEIR SUPPORTIVE ATTITUDE CAN BE MAINTAINED WITHOUT SOME QUICKER AND MORE EFFECTIVE RELIEF IN SIGHT.

6. GOM OFFICIALS HAVE ALREADY BROUGHT TO OUR ATTENTION BEFORE THE LATEST BUILDUP THEIR FEELING THAT OUR PROCEDURES FOR ACTUAL MOVEMENT ARE TOO SLOW. THEY WERE GLAD TO HEAR, FOR EXAMPLE,

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USMISSION GENEVA  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 KUALA LUMPUR 3603

LIMDIS

FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY HOLBROOKE AND ASSISTANT SECRETARY  
DERIAN FROM AMBASSADOR

THAT WE WOULD BE TAKING AN ADDITIONAL 4000 FROM MALAYSIA  
UNDER IPP78, BUT THEY CANNOT FAIL TO NOTE THAT AT THE PRESENT  
RATE IT WILL TAKE US FIVE TO EIGHT MONTHS TO MOVE EVEN THESE.  
EVEN GIVEN AN ADDITIONAL ANTICIPATED 1500 DEPARTURES TO THIRD  
COUNTRIES BY JULY, THIS SIMPLY DOES NOT KEEP PACE WITH THE  
BURGEONING ARRIVALS.

7. WE ARE CONCERNED THAT IF SOMETHING MORE SUBSTANTIAL IS NOT  
UNDERTAKEN SOON TO INCREASE ACTUAL DEPARTURES, THE MALAYSIAN  
ATTITUDE WILL HARDEN. AMONG OTHER THINGS, THE GOM IS FACED  
WITH THE PROSPECT OF NATIONAL ELECTIONS SOMETIME IN THE NEXT  
FEW MONTHS. WHILE THE REFUGEE ISSUE IS NOT LIKELY TO BE A MAJOR  
ONE NATIONALLY, IT COULD BE VERY SENSITIVE LOCALLY IN THE AREAS  
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WHERE THE REFUGEES ARE CONCENTRATED AND WHERE THE RULING PARTY  
ACES ONE OF ITS GREATEST ELECTORAL THREATS.

8. I THEREFORE URGE THAT CONSIDERATION BE GIVEN NOT ONLY TO

STREAMLINING OUR PRESENT PROCEDURES FURTHER BUT ALSO TO ADDITIONAL MEASURES WHICH WOULD SPEED UP THE FLOW OF DEPARTURES FOR THE U.S. REESTABLISHING A CAMP SOMEWHERE IN THE U.S. FOR REFUGEES AWAITING VOLAG APPROVAL IS ONE OBVIOUS WAY TO COPE WITH THE PROBLEM, BUT I HAVE NO IDEA WHETHER THIS WOULD NOW BE FEASIBLE. SHOT OF THAT, HOWEVER, EVEN GREATER EFFORTS MUST BE MADE TO SPEED VOLAG ASSURANCES, WHICH REMAIN A MAJOR BOTTLENECK. WE ALSO SUGGEST THAT WE BEGIN THINKING IN TERMS OF SUCH MEASURES AS CHARTERED AIRCRAFT TO TAKE LARGE NUMBERS OF REFUGEES OUT AT ONE TIME. WE ALSO NOTE THAT BOAT CASE ARRIVALS IN THAILAND ARE FAR LESS THAN WE ARE EXPERIENCING HERE IN MALAYSIA, AND WE APPRECIATE THAT THIS HAS ALREADY BEEN TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT IN THE IPP78 NUMBERS ALLOTTED TO US; WE HOPE IT IS ALSO BEING TAKEN FULLY INTO ACCOUNT IN DETERMINING PRIORITIES IN THE ALLOCATION OF VOLAG ASSURANCES AS WELL.

9. BEYOND THIS, IN WEIGHING THE PROBLEM HERE, WE BEGIN TO CONTEMPLATE THE POSSIBILITY, AT LEAST, THAT WE MAY EVENTUALLY FACE A GREATER FLOW OF VIETNAMESE BOAT REFUGEES THAN EVEN ALL OF OUR PROPOSED NEW PROGRAMS ARE EQUIPPED TO HANDLE. WE ARE STRUCK BY THE APPARENT EASE WITH WHICH LARGE NUMBERS OF REFUGEES ARE ABLE TO DEPART VIETNAM AND WITH THE LARGE NUMBERS OF THOSE STILL REMAINING WHO ARE SUBJECT TO THE SAME PRESSURES TO FLEE. WE ARE ALSO STRUCK BY THE RELATIVE EASE OF COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN THESE TWO GROUPS, WITH THE TREATMENT OF THE FORMER EVIDENTLY ADDING FURTHER ENCOURAGEMENT TO THE LATTER TO DEPART. AT THIS POINT WE ONLY WISH TO FLAG THIS POSSIBLE EVENTUALITY TO YOU BUT, AT A MINIMUM, I WOULD SUGGEST THAT WE SEEK TO DEVELOP MORE AND BETTER INFORMATION ON THE SUBJECT NOW.

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10. ONE IMMEDIATE OPERATIONAL NEED FOR US HERE IS TO SUPPLEMENT OUR PRESENT SINGLE REFUGEE OFFICER AND VOLAG CONTINGENT WITH ANOTHER REFUGEE OFFICER TO ASSIST BOTH IN THE ANTICIPATED INCREASED OPERATIONAL LOAD AND TO DEVELOP FURTHER INFORMATION ON REFUGEE ATTITUDES AND PROSPECTS. WE WERE EXTREMELY IMPRESSED WITH, AND GRATEFUL FOR, THE SERVICES OF AID OFFICER MEL CHATMAN RECENTLY IN THIS REGARD AND WOULD LIKE TO HAVE HIM RETURN. WE UNDERSTAND HE IS IN AN IMPORTANT CAREER-TRAINING COURSE NOW AND WE DO NOT REPEAT NOT SUGGEST HE CUT THAT SHORT. BUT WE WOULD LIKE TO HAVE HIM IMMEDIATELY AFTERWARD IF THAT IS POSSIBLE. IN THE MEANTIME, (OR INSTEAD, IF NECESSARY) WE WOULD LIKE AN EQUALLY WELL-QUALIFIED VIETNAMESE SPEAKING OFFICER TO GIVE US A HAND.

MILLER

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## Message Attributes

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**Capture Date:** 01 jan 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** REFUGEES, REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT, PROGRAMS (PROJECTS)  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 28 apr 1978  
**Decaption Date:** 20 Mar 2014  
**Decaption Note:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
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**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 20 Mar 2014  
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**TAGS:** SREF, MY  
**To:** STATE  
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